(September 3rd, 2013)

If you know someone who you think would benefit from being an Insider, feel free to forward this PDF to them so they can sign up here.

Quick Tips for our Insider friends!

Hey Insiders!

This newsletter is coming to from Redmond, where we're heads-down developing content for conferences, classes, and new Pluralsight courses. I'll be publishing two Pluralsight courses on database corruption this month (a basic and an advanced course).

We've just released 17 new 2014 classes for registration in Tampa, Chicago, and Bellevue, plus we're planning classes in Australia in March. All classes have alumnus discounts and many have buy-1-get-1-free offers for the first five registrants in 2013 – see my blog post HERE for details!

The most recent book I've read is Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. This is another classic novel that I've always wanted to read and I finally got around to it a couple of weeks ago as a break from the Dickens novels I read previously. The book was written to highlight the unreasonable moral prejudices in the latter half of the 19th Century and Hardy was heavily criticized for it. The story is ultimately tragic, with the heroine being forced to bear all kinds of unfair turns in her life at the hands of two men. It's very well written and less stodgy than Dickens – I really enjoyed it and so I recommend it.

Please let us know if you liked what you read/saw here and/or have any suggestions for future Quick Tips.

Note: you can get all the prior Insider newsletters here.

Paul's Ponderings

There are two pieces of news I'd like to talk about in this newsletter: a consistency-checking bug I found last week that you should all be aware of, and Microsoft's sudden cancelling of the entire MCM/MCSM late Friday night.

Consistency Checking Bug

Let's start with the bug I found. It's a confirmed bug in the way that the master and model databases are built during installation. From SQL Server 2005 onward, they're supposed to have the dbi_dbccFlags set to 2 in the database boot page (always page 9 in file 1), which means that the database is deemed "pure".

Why is this important? Well, if the value is set to 2, whenever DBCC CHECKDB is executed it automatically checks that column values are within the legal bounds of the column's data type and issues a 2570 error if not. If not, those consistency checks are not performed unless the WITH DATA_PURITY option is specified.

For any databases that were created before SQL Server 2005 (i.e. with a create version of 539 or lower), you're supposed to run DBCC CHECKDB with the DATA_PURITY option after upgrading to make sure all column values are legal, If this is the case, the dbi_dbccFlags is irrevocably set to 2, which marks the database as "pure".

You really want this to be the case so that any corruptions are discovered in future. I wrote a blog post that explains the issue and shows how to check the values in your databases – see here.

Yes, it's a bug I should have found back in 2003 when I wrote all that code, but at least it's not a bug in my DBCC CHECKDB, it's a bug in the boot page creation code. ☺

MCM Program

And now the second piece of news. At 10pm last Friday, Microsoft sent an email to everyone with an MCM/MCA certification (and some of us that are honorary MCMs from having taught it and written the labs) announcing that the program is being killed completely, effective October 1st.

You can read the text of the email here. It's cold. It's a really nasty way to end things, and doubly so as it seems that the communication was timed for the start of the holiday weekend in the US so things would blow over before today. Well, that's not happening!

Fellow MVP Jen Stirrup put together a Connect item calling for the certification to be retained, and at time of writing this newsletter (Monday afternoon) it had more than 460 up-votes. There are also a huge number of impassioned comments, plus one from Tim Sneath at Microsoft explaining some more about the decision (his comment was on 8/31/13 at 1.32pm PST). You can read the Connect item here. Please vote for it if you agree.

There are a bunch of blog posts out already discussing the topic – I like SQL MCM Jason Brimhall's long post here, which ties in a bunch of people's viewpoints and links out to other people's posts on the subject too.

I feel sad, as I wrote or reviewed all the lab and knowledge exam questions (along with Kimberly, Jonathan, and Joe), taught in the very first SQL MCM rotation when it was called Ranger and internal to Microsoft, and I taught in the last publicly-offered SQL MCM rotation back in 2010 (and all those in between except one), so I've felt an integral part of the program since day-1.

Also, as a company we've invested a lot of time and effort in the MCM program. Kimberly taught in all the public SQL rotations. Kimberly, Jonathan, Joe, and I also taught the SQL parts of the SharePoint MCM rotations. Jonathan and Joe are both MCMs themselves. And, of course, Joe ran the SQL MCM program for two years before he left Microsoft to join SQLskills.

Don't get me wrong – it wasn't all altruism – we were paid to teach and work on the exams, of course, as that's our business. But we also *really* worked hard to help those trying to take the exams. There's nothing more rewarding as a teacher then seeing student pass an exam that you've helped prepare them for.

I feel bad for all these people. And what about all of the time and energy of all those who strove towards the certification or were currently working their way up to it in knowledge and experience? This is NOT a certification that most can pass overnight and for some, it was a multi-year goal that they've been working on and had hoped to achieve. For the lucky few, they passed it after much time and before the new October deadline. But, they also spent a lot of money in the process. What use will the MCM be now that it's no longer a Microsoft-supported certification?

And, it all seems to have come as a surprise. Microsoft canceled the program when there are rotations for non-SQL MCM certifications planned after October 1st. And, just recently, they announced more ProMetric testing centers being available for taking the exams. This leaves only one month's notice for all the people who've been working, planning, and studying hard for months or years to have a quick crack at passing the exams before they're retired.

It just seems like such a waste, when the MCM is slowly gaining traction and more people are gaining the certification. It's a lot of wasted effort by a lot of people and what Microsoft has done and they way they've done it has really angered many in the SQL, SharePoint, Exchange, Lync, and Directory Services communities.

Way to go Microsoft.

Call to action: There are two calls to action this time:

1. Please follow the instructions in my blog post and make sure that the dbi_dbccFlags field is set correctly for your master and model databases.
2. Go to the Connect item for keeping the MCM program intact and up-vote it, if you agree that the certifications should be kept alive.

I'm curious to hear your thoughts on either of these topics, so please feel free to:

*   Drop me a line about DATA_PURITY checks and/or the consistency-checking bug
*   Drop me a line about the MCM program cancellation

Always treated confidentially, of course.

Video Demo

From Glenn:

In this video I show you how to enable Instant File Initialization (IFI) and how to confirm that it is in effect from inside SQL Server. This also includes a discussion of the benefits of IFI and why it should be enabled.

The video is six and a half minutes long and you can get it:

- In WMV format [here](#)
- In MOV format [here](#)

The demo code is available [here](#).

Enjoy!

SQLskills Offerings

As I mentioned above, we've just opened up our first-half of 2014 classes for registration. All classes have alumnus discounts equivalent to 25%-off the full price, and many have a special offer for the first 5 people who register for each class in 2013 – buy-1-get-1-free!

Please know that these classes are final as the hotel contracts are signed, and the classes will not be cancelled or moved for any reason, nor will the dates change.

Also, we've added a few new items to help you justify your training dollars:

- [Letter to your boss explaining why SQLskills training is worthwhile](#)

- [Community blog posts about our classes](#)

- [Immersion Event FAQ](#)

Remaining 2013 classes:

- September 16-20, 2013: Internals and Performance (**IE1**) in Bellevue **(SOLD OUT!)**
- September 18-19, 2013: Hardware (**IEHW**) in Bellevue, WA
    - **See [here](#) for special pricing offers!**
- September 23-27, 2013: Performance Tuning (**IE2**) in Bellevue, WA
- September 30-October 2, 2013: Accidental DBA (**IE0**) in Bellevue, WA
    - **See [here](#) for special pricing offers!**
- September 30-October 3, 2013: Advanced T-SQL (**IETS**) in Bellevue, WA
- November 11-15, 2013: Internals and Performance (**IE1**) in Chicago, IL

New 2014 classes:

Tampa, FL

- February 3-7, 2014: **IE1**: Immersion Event on Internals and Performance
- February 3-5, 2014: **IE0**: Immersion Event for the Accidental/Junior DBA
- February 6-7, 2014: **IEHW**: Immersion Event on SQL Server Hardware
- February 10-14, 2014: **IE2**: Immerion Event on Performance Tuning
- February 10-14, 2014: **IEDEV**: Immersion Event for Developers
- February 17-21, 2014: **IE3**: Immersion Event on High Availablity and Disaster Recovery
- February 17-21, 2014: **IEBI**: Immersion Event on Business Intelligence

Chicago, IL

- April 28 – May 2, 2014: **IE1**: Immersion Event on Internals and Performance
- May 1-2, 2014: **IEHW**: Immersion Event on SQL Server Hardware
- May 5-9, 2014: **IE2**: Immerion Event on Performance Tuning
- May 5-9, 2014: **IEBI**: Immersion Event on Business Intelligence
- May 12-16, 2014: **IE3**: Immersion Event on High Availablity and Disaster Recovery
- May 13-16, 2014: **IETS**: Immersion Event on Advanced Transact-SQL
- May 19-23, 2014: **IE4**: Immersion Event on Security, PowerShell, and Developer Support
- May 19-21, 2014: **IE0**: Immersion Event for the Accidental/Junior DBA

Bellevue, WA

- June 9-13, 2014: **IE1**: Immersion Event on Internals and Performance
- June 16-20, 2014: **IE2**: Immerion Event on Performance Tuning

See here for the main Immersion Event Calendar page that allows you to drill through to each class for more details and registration links.

Summary

We hope you've enjoyed this issue - we really enjoy putting these together.

If there is anything else you're interested in, we'd love to hear from you - drop us a line.

Thanks,
Paul and Kimberly

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